



"Integrity...Fairness...Service"

BUSINESS BEAT

A Report to Business from the Baltimore County Police Department

September 2011

Think Before Saying No

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Subscribe now to join the growing number of business community members who receive this free monthly publication via e-mail from Baltimore County Police.

Business community members will receive important public safety information sent directly to their e-mail address free of charge. The publication offered is a monthly newsletter called Business Beat. It provides useful crime prevention tips geared toward the small business community.

We invite you to become part of the expanding network of businesses and law enforcement professionals who are proactively dealing with issues that affect us all.

Knowledge is a powerful crime-fighting tool. Let's use our communications resources wisely.

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For years we have stressed the importance of doing a background check when hiring a new employee. Part of the investigation for some businesses also includes a credit check to determine the financial stability of the person in question. It stands to reason that if someone has a poor credit rating, then he or she may not be trusted with company funds or inventory. The person has bills to pay and could be tempted to skim a little off the top to help make ends meet.

To get a better understanding of the weak economy's affect on the work force, a report by Experian, a credit reporting company, reports that 15 percent of consumers now have credit scores of 550 and below. While 58 percent of Americans have maintained a credit score of over 692, there are those who, through no fault of their own, have poor credit scores. A bad FICO number can hurt anyone trying to establish credit, obtain a loan, buy a house, and, in some cases, get a job.

We are not saying that employers should stop doing background checks. However, when someone has a less than stellar credit report, there may be a very good reason. Many people are going through some rough times and some people have been out of work for months, and in some cases, years. Unemployment compensation only goes so far. There are workers who have exhausted their benefits and are living on a shoestring.

When interviewing an applicant, take into consideration today's economic atmosphere. You know all about it as your business has, in all likelihood, felt the crunch of falling sales and mounting bills. You can also empathize with an individual who is struggling because their credit score may not be what it once was. You may have had a difficult time securing a loan to keep your business from going into bankruptcy. This economic crunch has hit businesses large and small. When profits decline, companies trim back and one of the first things to go is the labor force.



How to Reach Us...**Emergency911**

Non-Emergency Complaints:
.....410-887-2222

Burglary Unit:
.....410-887-6296

Robbery Unit:
.....410-887-2017

Crime Information Hotline:
.....410-583-2309

Community Resources Team:
.....410-887-5901

Workplace Violence Team:
.....410-931-2230

Gang Hotline:
.....410-823-0785

Precinct Outreach Units:
(all are area code 410)

Wilkens Pct. 1..... 744-1584

Woodlawn Pct. 2..... 887-4714

Franklin Pct. 3..... 887-6985

Pikesville Pct. 4..... 887-6775

Towson Pct. 6..... 887-5933

Cockeysville Pct. 7..... 887-1863

Parkville Pct. 8..... 887-5439

White Marsh Pct. 9..... 887-5035

Essex Pct. 11..... 887-0232

North Point Pct. 12..... 887-7337

Find us on the Web:

<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/police>

The Honorable Kevin Kamenetz
Baltimore County Executive

Now obviously, if company policy dictates that you can not hire someone who has bad credit, there's very little you can do as a manager. You have to go with the person who best fits your company's needs. However, if you do find an individual you think could be an asset to your workplace, but lacks good credit, sit down and talk to him or her about the situation.

Before you do so, you'll want to have the credit report in front of you. This will help both you and the applicant go through the reasons why his or her financial situation is in poor shape. After your interview, discuss your findings with a supervisor. If you believe that the man or woman is a victim of the times and not an irresponsible person, think about establishing a probationary period to give him or her a chance to establish personal credibility.

While the person you're interviewing may have a less than perfect credit report, it is important to do a reference check. How often do you or those in Human Resources really check the information provided by the potential employee? Doing that part of the background check is key to hiring someone that can be put into a position of trust. A criminal background check is an absolute necessity if someone is going to be handling cash and/or the books. A word of caution, going online to do background checks is not always the most reliable or safest way to go. The information could be out of date or worse yet, inaccurate and false.

There are companies that specialize in doing background checks for a fee. Before you sign on the dotted line with an agency, ask them how they obtain their information. If they use the internet, you might as well do it yourself, and save some money. Nothing beats making phone calls to people listed as references and contacting former employers.

There have been cases where accountants and bookkeepers have been hired without doing a thorough check of their references. If Human Resources or management had done a little extra digging they might have discovered that the person in question had been fired from other companies because of embezzlement.

If you decide to do a criminal background check, you must ask for permission from the applicant. He or she may be asked to be fingerprinted to verify his or her identity.

If any of the checks come back negative, you must inform the applicant of the source of the negative findings. That person then has the right, by law, to question the source of the information to find out what has been reported to the bureaus.

Be careful when hiring; don't let your emotions take over when looking at a new hire.